The PULPIT

A Periodical of Contemporary Preaching

DECEMBER 1947

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SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS

Contributed by Readers of *The* PULPIT

Christmas—and Home

Christmas strikes that universal chord, Home. That song of the wandering, homesick American, "Mid pleasures and palaces," has received universal acclaim. In the early spring of 1863 the Union and Confederate armies lay encamped along the Rappahannock river near Fredericksburg, the Union army on the northern bank and the Confederate on the southern bank. Sometimes in the spring evenings, when there was a lull in the fighting, the bands would play the favorite songs. The Union bands would play "We Are Coming, Father Abraham," "Tenting Tonight" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." After their bands had finished the songs, the Union soldiers would raise a great cheer. On the southern side the bands would play "Dixie" or "My Maryland," and then the Confederate soldiers would raise a cheer. At length the bands on the northern shore would play "Home, Sweet Home," and when the music was over both armies would set up a resounding shout of cheer. "Home, Sweet Home" knew no North or South, for it is universal music.—*Clarence E. Macartney, First Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa.*

'I Knew Him! 'I Knew Him!'

Many years ago, when Helen Keller was a young girl, shut off from all communication with the world by the impenetrable curtain of blindness and the prison wall of deafness, her teacher labored with her for hours trying to get messages through. Then came the day when her teacher wanted her to learn about God. Who could be better fitted than the great preacher, Phillips Brooks, to let the sunlight of God's love in? Bishop Brooks was asked to let the girl place her fingertips on his lips as he talked in simple language about God and his revelation in the person of Jesus Christ. The features of Helen Keller began to work, as her body grew tense and rigid. Suddenly she could stand it no longer, and she cried out: "I knew him! I knew him! I didn't know his name, but I knew him."

There is a hidden instinct within man that reaches out to that which is above and beyond, and for which he has used many different names, but the simplest and most profound of these names is God. Like strains of distant music come into our hearts the words: "As the hart panteth after the waterbrook, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." And often, from the lips of the sensitive soul, come these words: "I knew him! I knew him! I didn't know his name, but I knew him."—*M. B. Eastwick, First Presbyterian Church, North Arlington, N. J.*

Too Great a Theme for Milton!

In the collected poems of John Milton you will find a poem entitled "The Passion," as a rule appearing just after the grand poem on the Incarnation, "The Morning of Christ's Nativity." Having written of the Incarnation, it was Milton's purpose to write on the Atonement, or the passion of Christ on the cross. The poem consists of just eight introductory stanzas. At the end of the eighth stanza is a note by the poet: "This subject the author finding to be above the years he had when he wrote it, and nothing satisfied with what was begun, left it unfinished."

If even so great a genius and intellect as Milton found that the Atonement was too great for him, then what shall we say of the ordinary mind? The best that we can do is to touch the outermost hem of the crimson robe of the Atonement. The Cherubim cover the rest with their wings. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"—*C. E. Macartney, First Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa.*

In the Footsteps of Jesus

The work of Frank C. Laubach in the Philippines, South America and elsewhere is well known. He has given much of his life to teaching illiterates to read. He describes his method in these words: "The illiterate is blind and knows it. He is swindled by scoundrels and is unable to earn more than barely enough to survive. . . . If you sit down beside him lovingly and pray while you teach him, it is as easy to win his friendship as it is to open his understanding of the printed word. Remembering that you are trying to win him to yourself, and then to Christ, you are very careful not to scold, frown or show irritation. You never ask him a question he can't answer. You never say No to him. You look pleased and surprised and tell him that he is doing fine whenever he answers correctly and you try to help him discover in himself possibilities he never dreamed were there. You will see his shoulders go back and a new look come to his face and a new light in his eyes."

"Often illiterates ask us," says Dr Laubach: "Why are you doing this for me? No educated person ever paid any attention to me before." "And then we reply," says Dr. Laubach: "I learned it from Jesus. Every minute of the day Jesus was helping people. I believe we all have to be more like him, and that is the reason I am teaching you. I don't want any money, but when I finish I wish you would take these lessons and teach your neighbors. You would make a fine teacher because you are learning so well. Don't take any money for it, and your heart will sing. The happiest people in the world are like Jesus, spending their time trying to help others."—*Frederick A. Roblee, First Presbyterian Church, Bay City, Mich.*

What to Preach

Dr. Emil Brunner had been invited to preach at the Princeton Chapel during the bicentennial celebrations of Princeton University. He is a distinguished theologian. He is slowly marking the theological thinking of a generation of church leaders. What would this great Christian preach about on this great occasion? The question not only stirred the minds of those who knew he would be there to preach, but Brunner himself was troubled by the question. Should not a centennial orator say something important about world problems, international peace, social and industrial justice? Should not these be the concern of his sermon on that day in that famous chapel? "This," said Brunner, "was what I said to myself as I prepared for the occasion. And then Paul tapped me on the shoulder and said: 'You fool! Do you think you can preach on anything more important than the love of God for man? You go down there to Princeton and preach the gospel of God in Jesus Christ!'" And so he did, with power—the power that comes only when God lays his hand upon a man's heart.—*Raymond E. Dronsfield, Oakland Park Presbyterian Church, Columbus, Ohio.*

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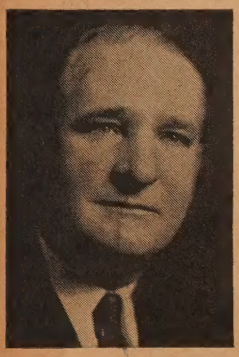
The Glorious Journey of Three Wise Fools

By THOMAS ANDERSON

Text: Matthew 2:1-11.

THE glorious journey of the three wise fools began at divergent points, one in India, another in Persia and another in Chaldea. It was about a month before the Advent, or the arrival of Jesus in the form of a child born of Mary in Bethlehem.



For many hundreds of years that four-week period preceding Christmas has been known in the Christian churches as the Advent, or arrival season. It has been, and is, of great value as a period of preparation for the proper appreciation of the anniversary of that tremendous event, when Christ the Lord came down to earth and the angels sang their immortal songs to the shepherds watching their flocks on the hills.

There are few things more helpful to a proper approach to Christmas than an appreciation of that month-long journey of the three Oriental kings across the deserts to that obscure village in an outlying province of the Roman empire. There is great value in it, too, as a source of inspiration and power for successful living in the common days throughout the year.

The journey of Gaspar and Melchior and Balthazar was one of the most illustrious journeys of history because of many reasons. When they are understood by us, they will make our way through life a glorious journey. For multitudes the journey through life is a sordid, dull affair, lacking the luster and grandeur and exalted joy it should hold. It is toward making the journeys of men and women through life a joyful, lustrous experience, even a glorious journey, that the church of Christ strives. It is regrettable that so many churches fail in that by dealing almost entirely with the life beyond. Then, too, it is regrettable that so many burden the wayfarers in this life with incidental restrictions, so many don'ts, so many warnings and so much doctrinal impedimenta that much of the pleasure they should know in making the journey, not from the cradle to the grave, but through the grave, is taken away.

I

First, we should observe that to make their journey a glorious experience Melchior and his companions had to disencumber themselves of much. They had to disengage themselves from many traditional patterns of life and conduct. Doubtless some who saw them disengaging themselves from the old forms and familiar places and setting forth in search of a greater and better King than any Persia or Chaldea or India offered, called them fools. But they were fools, blessed fools, after the pattern of Abraham who believed there were greater things than were yet known and so disengaged himself from the familiar places to look for an unseen city which had foundations whose builder and maker is God.

Moses was the fool of his time, in the eyes of many, in thinking there were better things for the people than the familiar brickyards of Egypt, and he too laid much aside as he set out to find a land of promise out there across the deserts. And there are those blessed fools such as Paul, disencumbering himself of Phariseeism and going on the journey to discover Jesus. And there are Galileo and Copernicus and Newton and Darwin and Martin Luther and the Pilgrims and scores of others making a glorious journey to new opportunities, new understandings and new freedoms. Fools all in their time, but the years have shown them to have been wise enough to discover much and to open vast new realms of marvel and surprise.

Many in our time think of those as utterly foolhardy who question the old social forms or who inquire about the validity of ancient religious ideas and count it certain disaster to lay down old things of faith and practice and go in search of better and greater understandings of God or social and religious procedures. Many cry only, "Seek ye the old paths and walk therein."

There is great need for a larger practice, especially among religious folk, of the art of laying aside. There are many ancient forms and ecclesiastical and doctrinal practices which encumber our religious world. Our journeys toward better days through religion are hampered by old religious fears known by the ancients who lived when the world was young, its population small and its knowledge limited. It is strange how much is left to survive in the religious areas of life merely because it has been. The same thing would not be tolerated in the fields of chemistry or surgery or transportation. Many in these days of the swift motorcar, the airplane and streamlined trains still make their religious journeys in the crude vehicles of thought designed and built by men to whom the science of aerodynamics, the principle of jet propulsion, the internal combustion engine and the horsepower machines born of steam were utterly unknown.

It is agreed among thoughtful people that religion is still too much in the days of oxcart thinking. One of our purposes in this church is to aid men and women in this great area to progress from oxcart religion to the philosophy and practice meeting in some degree the

advances in other realms. We seek to offer services and to employ methods honoring the kind of mind which is capable of producing and employing radio waves for communication rather than a stone tablet carried on foot across the hills as was true when many of the ideas about God were developed, much of the thinking about human relationships was done and many of the patterns of religious thought and practice were set. The way of the glorious journey is the way of the man who believes there are new and better paths of human relationships and service to God and man out there yet unknown that should be known.

We in this church are making such a journey and invite all brave souls to share in the high adventure of moving on toward what is more than oxcart religion, more than stone tablet patterns of social relationships and more than horse and buggy theology.

II

Another thing that made that ancient journey glorious was that the three men acted on what their spirits saw, even though their minds did not comprehend it. There was something calling to their hearts out there which, while not mentally tangible, was nevertheless a reality to their souls. There was a spirit beckoning them which they as learned men had not discovered in all their books and all their studies. Finally this thing of the spirit, this thing beyond the capacity of the mind, this illogical urging in their souls became so real that they said it was like a star in the East. Melchior and Balthazar and Gaspar said they could see it. Now it does not matter if there was a literal star in the sky or not. A star in the heart, a light in the soul can be as real as any heavenly body. A pushing on the spirit can be as positive as a hand upon the shoulder. A comprehension of the spirit, not discernible by the mind, can be as definite as anything one can establish by mathematical processes or the procedures of man's reason. Some wonder if there really was a star in the sky. I do not know, nor do I care; for I know there was a star in their hearts, a light in their spirits, a calling to their souls that demanded attention, and I know they did not deny it, even though they who were acknowledged as wise men appeared as fools for looking at it and being influenced by it.

Those around them who accepted and believed only that which was logical, only that which their minds could comprehend, doubtless pointed their fingers at them and shook their heads and said, "They are fools." Then when they got their goods together and mounted their camels and announced their purpose to follow the leadings of that something the others could not see, their friends and associates became sure that they had lost their minds. But they were wise fools —like the one who, torn and bleeding, was asked by another what he had been doing, answered, "I have been making paths in the wilderness." The other said: "Let go the wilderness. There are smooth and good paths in the valleys." But the answer was: "I cannot; the wilderness will not let me go."

The thing the three men of old saw that others did not see wouldn't let them go and they set out on the journey that was glorious because it was a heeding of the spirit and the recognition of possibilities the mind had not the capacity to comprehend. That is always the thing that makes the journey of life glorious. How often lives are lacking in luster; how often people lack joy in living; how frequently the journey is inglorious and dull and monotonous because people believe only what they see with their mental eyes and look not at all for the things the eyes of the spirit can see!

The truly wise do not set boundaries at the limit of their minds' comprehensions. There are the horizons of the soul. There's a star in the sky of every heart pointing to nobler living, more heroic endeavor, to holy goals of divine achievement. There is such a star in your heart. None other may see it but you. But see it and follow it and life will become a glorious journey for you, and though your mind and the mind of others may insist you are a fool, you will be a wise fool going on the only glorious journey there is, even the journey controlled by the spirit. Respond to the spirit and its urgings. Give heed to the beckonings of God's hand calling to your soul, and the spirit will show you stars you never saw before. Accept the possibilities of a mighty area of experience beyond which the mind or body can go. Remember that there is a third dimension of your life, follow the star shining there as an urging to nobler living and finer achievements, and you will find a redemption from dullness in your life. Then the way from where you are through the grave to the fair worlds beyond will no longer be a dull, monotonous luster-lacking, weary road, but a great and challenging experience like the glorious journey of those three wise fools.

The church will help you get your goods together. The church will provide you with a camel for your journey. And it will afford the strong and enduring fellowship of others who have seen the stars and are also wise fools moving out to bring their gifts to him who is man's only rightful King.

III

Again, those wise fools of old had a glorious journey because it was dominated by a magnificent purpose. Always it has been so—the journey through life has been glorious only when it was a divinely purposeful thing. Hosts of people have found the journey a dull, monotonous affair lacking in joy because there was no dominant purpose in it of sufficient grandeur to make it illustrious. Getting and spending, accumulating and keeping, working and resting, eating and drinking, playing and sleeping—these are not enough to make life's journey glorious. Living within the limits of these has accounted for the lack of luster in the lives of multitudes. For want of a sufficiently worthy purpose many have lacked even a sense of journey, and life to them is but a going around in circles. It is only a plowing of ground to plant hay to feed horses, that they may plow more ground to plant more hay to feed more horses.

The greatness of Christianity lies in its ability to make the lives of men magnificently purposeful. It is for that reason that the philosophy of Jesus exceeds in value that of any other teacher in all history. It is at this same point that the greatness of any church appears,

or that greatness is not in the perfection of its rituals, ıe exactness of its doctrine, the correctness of its creeds, ıe perfection of its people, but in its ability to make ıd keep human lives related to great and worthy pur- ɔses. And the church stands among all other institu- ons, like the greatest peak in a chain of mountains, ı this most important of all endeavors. Because of that, for no other reason,

For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend,
To her my cares and toils be given
Till toils and cares shall end.

The magnificent purpose of Melchior and Gaspar nd Balthazar which made their journey glorious came ɔ light when they brought their treasures forth and ıade wondrous gifts to an unknown Child whom, be- ıuse they were truly wise, they immediately recognized s the One more worthy than all others of their wor- ıip, their allegiance and their gifts. They had begun nd had made the journey with the purpose of making roper gifts to a King who was a king indeed, and not ecause of his political power or economic rule. He is King indeed because of his ruling of his own soul, he mandating of his own life to human betterment nd his decreeing that a Kingdom should be among men vhere the only law would be love, the ruling thought hould be the Fatherhood of God and the purpose hould be the realization of the oneness and universal rotherhood of man.

Our journey in life is made immediately glorious vhen our purpose is to carry gifts to that same King nd his Kingdom. That above all is purpose sublime. Chat purpose above all redeems life from lack of luster nd makes it an experience of glory. There is the gold f deeds of kindness done, the frankincense of love nd forgiveness gladly given, the myrrh of gentleness nd patience with God's children. To make our pur- ɔose the carrying of these elements of true wealth to he King of heaven will make our journey truly glori- ɔus.

I have wondered if the three wise fools had those ifts with them when they began the journey or if they ccumulated them on the way. It matters not, for when hey came to the Christ they had acceptable gifts to ɔresent to him. So far as we are concerned, our gifts ıust be accumulated on the way and we must be per- ıuaded to make the accumulation, since we are not wise o begin with as were Melchior and Gaspar and Bal- hazar. That is another thing the church is ever doing. t is ever seeking to persuade us to gather proper wealth nd acceptable treasures of achievment and loyalties and ɔoodness as we make our journeys. And that is not an asy task for the church. It involves making us over nto wise fools, even fools wise enough to deny earthly vealth and fools enough to make our treasures those aid up in heaven for the honor of an unseen King.

Yes, my wealth and yours, my gold of good will and ours, my frankincense of justice served and yours, and ny myrrh of compassion given and yours will need to e accumulated on the way—and they can be. They an be because this life, this world, is a veritable mine f possibilities of such accumulations. Perhaps that is vhy it is the kind of world it is. One could not imagine a better world in which to accumulate such treasures. In this world of need and suffering one can obtain great wealth through the exercise of compassion. Since it is a world of hate one can grow rich in heaven's eyes by the practice of good will, and since it is a world freighted with injustices one can accumulate great stores of that rare and precious jewel, mercy. Make it your purpose to accumulate these treasures, to have gifts like these for the King, and this business of living will become a glorious journey and you will find a divine friendship, holy adventures and a crown.

IV

Finally, I have no doubt that when those around those three men there in Bethlehem saw them making their gifts to that Child, some said, "What fools they are!" Others may have said: "They should have given their gifts to Herod or to Caesar; they are kings with a kingdom that is real. They are those who can do something for them and this one to whom they are making their gifts is but a peasant child." And many say the same things today as they see others making their gifts of time and money and effort to Christ and his Kingdom.

But those three men were wise enough to think in greater terms than winning political advantage, immediate economic benefits or the transient favor of a temporal king. They would have been simple fools, indeed, if they had thought and acted only in terms of immediate and quick gain. But they were wise enough to think beyond Herod and Caesar to Him whose kingship was of and for eternity.

Many today consider it to be the way of a fool to think that the ways of Jesus will ever be the ways of a winning King and they make their gifts to others, who are monarchs of lands and business and earthly orders. But they are due for an awakening, for there are so many "wise fools" in this world who believe the kingdoms of this world can be the Kingdoms of our Lord and Christ and are working for that glorious end. There are many who are making their journeys toward where he is who is the only rightful monarch of life to lay their treasures of good will and compassion accumulated in the way at his feet.

If you would be one of those who have this magnificent purpose, you will need help for it. It is not an easy thing to accumulate the treasures of good will in a world of hate. It is a difficult task to obtain the jewel of unselfish compassion in a world organized for and around self-interest. And it requires great strength of soul to obtain the wealth that is forgiveness in this world of aggressive human beings.

The church is in the world to help you and it can aid you greatly in this most important thing. Become a part of a church which strengthens people in this great purpose, and the journey you are making will become glorious. It will not be "from the cradle to the grave" but beyond to Him who is no longer "wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger," but who has become a Man gone out into the world to give such meaning to life that for all who would hear him and follow him it would be a way of luster and joy, even like that glorious journey of the three wise fools.

Our Constant Contemporary

By E. RAY BURCHELL

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and forever. Hebrews 13:8.

THE strangest biography ever written tells how a person who was born in a stable, reared in a carpenter's shop, set out at the age of thirty to make the world better by showing it a better way to live. At that world task he worked for three brief years and then his enemies put him to death. As he hung there on his cross etched against a darkened sky, all who saw it happen felt sure it was the last they would ever hear of him. It was the end. The certainty of that end brought joy to his enemies and sorrow to his friends.

But three days later a few bewildered disciples and frightened women were whispering the amazing news that he was alive. They were sure of it, for they had seen him and felt his presence. Like wildfire that news passed from person to person, kindling new hope where before there had been hopelessness. Across the centuries it leaped. An intrepid band of Pilgrims brought it with them as their prized possession to a new continent. In the years that followed pioneers carried it with them as they pushed their way deeper and deeper into the wilderness that stretched off toward the west, and wherever they settled and built their homes there they also built their church.

A LIVING PRESENCE

Today we worship in a church which stands where once there was virgin forest and we are talking about One who lived and died nearly 2,000 years ago. Is that where we stop in this narrative? If it is, we stop. This church would never have been built; and, for that matter, no Christian church would ever have been built. People do not meet together for long—certainly not for 2,000 years—just to talk about a memory. We are drawn here this morning, as others before us were drawn, by a living Presence. No matter how the years come and go, or what happens with their coming and going, we have Christ who "is the same yesterday and today and forever." In the midst of change he is changeless. Therefore, say not that we talk about One who lived and died 2,000 years ago. Rather say we talk about One who lived and died and lives—our Constant Contemporary.

That conviction is not the possession of a few choice personalities living at a particular time in a particular place. You are apt to stumble on it in any person, at any time, in any place. Said a great preacher and religious thinker: "If anyone should knock at the door of my heart and say, 'Who dwells here?' I should r more answer 'Martin Luther.' I should answer 'Jesu Christ.'"

Francis Thompson, poet, educated for the medic profession but failing in the examinations, becoming ad dicted to opium because that softened the hard aspec of his miserable failure and made life at least livabl selling matches on the streets of London to get a fe pence for food and more opium, sleeping on the em bankment of the Thames river, tempted to fling him self into its dark waters but for one restraining han —hear him:

> Yea, in the night, my soul . . .,
> Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems;
> And lo, Christ walking on the water
> Not of Gennesareth, but Thames!

WHEN CHRIST DRAWS NIGH

Sir Robert Scott, British explorer, setting out to dis cover the South Pole, reaching it only to find tha Amundsen had been there before him, ordering th party to turn their dog teams around to make the long perilous journey back to their boat; but he never reache it, for blizzards made traveling impossible, and on after another of the party died out there in the Ant arctic waste. Some months later a rescue party foun Captain Scott's tent, and in his diary, almost the las entry written with frozen fingers, they read: "As w sit here in this barren waste we think of home and ou beloved ones. . . . Yet we are cheered, for it seems tha there are three of us here, not just two. It is Jesus and his presence that comforts us. All along he seems t have journeyed with us."

And then there was that old colored woman living in a rude cabin out in the hills of Virginia. All he family had died. When a traveler passing by called out a friendly greeting, asking who lived there, she an swered gaily, "Nobody but me and Jesus."

Think you for a minute that Christ is only a mem ory? No, not a memory but a living Presence who "is the same yesterday and today and forever."

A MESSENGER FROM GOD

Here is the evidence. How account for it? What is there about Christ that makes him a living Presence? Is it Christ only? There have been those who seeing him have always wanted to stop with seeing only him. And he would not have it so; he was always trying to get people to look beyond him and see Someone Else. When a rich young ruler addressed him as "Good Master," Christ was irritated by the compliment and answered: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but God." He kept reminding people that a servant was not superior to his master and a messenger was not superior to the one who sent him. He thought of himself only as a servant, only as a messenger. He did not do his own bidding; he did the bidding of God. He did not carry his own messages; he carried messages given him by God. John was quick to sense that distinction, for in the Fourth Gospel, when he wrote of Christ, he called him God's Word. That is significant. If I want you to understand the thoughts and purposes I

have in my mind, the best way for me to do that is to speak to you about them. Christ is that Spoken Word. Through him God speaks the language we speak and understand. But if we get hold of Christ only, we have gotten hold only of the Spoken Word, the Word made flesh. And Christ would have us reach beyond him to get hold of God.

Christ, then, is our Constant Contemporary not because of what he was himself. "The Son," he said, "can do nothing of himself." He is our Constant Contemporary because of the One he represents, whose Word he speaks, whose bidding he does. "The Son can do . . . what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." So when we look to Christ from our distress and call to him for help, not one of us thinks he is calling to someone who must be reached over 2,000 years of time and change. The One to whom we cry is the Living Link who brings God near.

WHEN GOD IRKS US

And sometimes that nearness doesn't always work out the way we would like. A few years ago Rachel Crother wrote a play about the two characters whose names appeared in the title, "Susan and God." Susan was one of those hapless mortals who found life deadly dull until she found some fad, and, giving herself to that, she had something to live for—at least as long as the fad lasted. Then life would take on its dull tone again until another fad came along. It was during one of these dull, depressing periods that some of her friends invited her to join the Oxford Group, and at once she began believing in God on the basis that (and these are her words): "now everything will be lovely, all is sweetness and light." God was just another fad, and not a bad one at that, until he began to make his real demands upon her loyalties, then she cried out exasperated and bewildered: "Oh, I wish I had never heard of God!"

"Religion," as someone has put it, "ought to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable," and that's what happens when Christ brings God near. Luther leading the Reformation, Thompson wandering about the streets of London as an outcast, Scott dying in the Antarctic waste far from home and family and friends, that aged colored mammy living her last days alone in a cabin in Virginia and yet not alone—all of these found that when Christ came close, he brought God near, and God's nearness was comforting and encouraging. But for others who want to settle down on that little claim they call their own, that begins with themselves and ends with what they want, the feeling that will be theirs when Christ brings God near will not be a comfortable feeling but a miserable one, and, like Susan, not finding that everything is "lovely, all is sweetness and light," they will want to cry out: "Oh, I wish I had never heard of God!"

NO SENTIMENTALITY!

One thing you will find when you meet this Constant Contemporary face to face is that he has no use for any sentimentalizing of religion. To a prospective disciple who felt the glow of Christ's companionship and wanted to be with him, Christ pointed out the hardships of the choice: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." To another person who wished to follow but first wanted to go back home and bury his father, Christ answered with an Aramaic proverb: "Let the dead past bury its dead." To another who wanted to follow but wished to go back home and bid farewell to his family and friends, Christ answered: "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God." There is something that God wants done. Are you going to help him or aren't you? Either get in line or get out. That's what Christ thought of religion. It meant yielding wholeheartedly to God's demands.

We easily miss that and do the very thing he hates. In our hymnals there is a hymn for children and only children ought to sing it. It isn't a hymn for adults.

> I think when I read that sweet story of old,
> When Jesus was here among men,
> How he called little children as lambs to his fold,
> I should like to have been with him then.

For children, I say, that's all right. But for adults who ought to be doing what God wants done, it is too sentimental. You "should like to have been with him then"? I wonder. After he had chosen the twelve disciples, he said: "I'm sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. You will be seized and flogged and some of you will be put to death. Everywhere you will be hated. Whenever they persecute you in one town, escape as soon as you can and go on to the next." That's what it was like to be with him then and you wouldn't have liked it any more than you like being with him today. For now as then, over against our foolish ways he sets the Way. Over against our wishful thinking he sets the Truth. Over against our frustrated lives he sets the Life, well ordered, well directed. He still sees in us what needs to be made right, and, like a skilled diagnostician, he places his finger on the place, saying, "Thou ailest here and here and here," and we don't always like it.

OUR HYPOCRITIC PRETENSIONS

Still we tell ourselves that we "should like to have been with him then," and we boast what we would have done had we been there. When Clovis, king of the Franks, first heard the story of Calvary from the lips of a missionary, he flew into a rage and cried: "Had I and my Franks been there, it would never have happened." So we boast, but our boasting is empty. What we do speaks louder than what we say. And what we have done hasn't always been what he wants done. As individuals we haven't done it. The main impact of his life was to build the kind of world God wants, a world that could be called a Kingdom of God. That Kingdom, said Christ, "is within you." It begins there as right motives toward yourself, toward all others—generosity, helpfulness, kindness, all of which are expressions of love. But is our love generous, helpful, kind? If it is we are building a Kingdom of God. If it turns in upon itself, seeks its own prestige and profit, then we

are building a kingdom of hell, and that also is within us.

As nations we haven't always done what Christ wants done. The nations that have been ruling the world for the last 150 years or more have been the so-called Christian nations. Would you say that what we have built is a Kingdom of God or a kingdom of hell? Nations are not bound together by mutual cooperation and good will; they are separated by mutual greed and distrust. E. Stanley Jones points out that the central law of human relationships according to Christ is: "Thou shalt love . . . thy neighbor as thyself." That is God's way of getting along with other people and with other nations as well, since nations are nothing more than groups of people. So long as we obey that law of love we get along with our neighbor. When we no longer love our neighbor, we do not get rid of him. He is still our neighbor but he has become our problem and our pain. As Dr. Jones suggestively puts it, "The Kingdom of God is among you," and when we realize the way that Kingdom is built, we get along well with others.

HAS THE CHURCH BEEN LOYAL?

As a church we haven't always done what Christ wants done. When Paul called the church "the body of Christ," he brought it face to face with its most solemn obligation. Through the church, dedicated to One who lived and died and lives, Christ continues his ministry to a world that still needs the ministry to go on making it a Kingdom of God.

Christ has no hands but our hands
To do his work today;
He has no feet but our feet
To lead men in his way;
He has no tongue but our tongues
To tell men how he died;
He has no help but our help
To bring them to his side.

So, the church is a body bent on ministering. We are not meant to be shut off from the world; we are meant to get out into the world, doing what his hands would do, going where his feet would go, speaking what his tongue would speak, leading others where he would lead them into a Kingdom of God.

We "should like to have been with him then." Let's not sentimentalize any longer. We *are* with him, not then but now, for he is our Constant Contemporary. And today we do what we never would have done then —not us—we crucify him. "He that is not with me is against me." Christ will accept no halfhearted loyalties. He comes with his Way, but we have our ways, and we can't travel all ways at the same time. Either we are his or we aren't. Either we go his way or we don't. We can't deceive him. Let's stop trying to deceive ourselves.

Arthur John Gossip tells us that the people who crucified Christ were the people who had been watching for the Messiah to come, bravely refusing to give up hope, sure that one day he would come. And when Christ came, they brushed by him in the streets, and because he did not look like the Messiah they expected they laughed at his claims, said he was an impostor, put him out of the way, and, that done, they turned to hope and wait and watch once more. "Let us beware," says Dr. Gossip, "lest what we too resent and shake off and dislike . . . in our day is—God."

'NOT WHILE HE HANGS THERE'

What we have been saying Charles Rann Kennedy puts vividly into his play "The Terrible Meek." On a wind-swept hill with the darkness pressing in close we hear a Roman soldier and the mother of Christ talking together at the foot of the cross. It is strange talk about empire building. "What makes them do it?" asks the mother of Christ. The captain replies: "They want money; they want power; they want kingdoms; they want to possess the earth." And the mother, looking up at her son hanging there on the cross, says pathetically: "And they have won. They have it." But the captain in a flash of insight answers: "Have they? Not while your son hangs there."

We know whereof he speaks. We can't go on our way comfortably with him hanging there. Get him down and out of sight. Put him into a tomb and bury him. But he will not stay buried; he keeps coming back to walk the crowded ways of life; for he who is "the same yesterday and today, yea and forever" says: "The Kingdom of God is within you. The Kingdom of God is among you. Follow me!"

Multitudes and Mountains

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain." That was no mere gesture on the part of Jesus. It was not a pious retreat. It was not the mere exercise of a deeply religious nature, not an escape mechanism nor luxury of his private and spiritual disposition. It was a practical step forced on him because he loved the multitude, felt their pressure, and wanted to find out from God what to do with them, and to teach them what to do for themselves. Life's crowds, both of people and of complex situations, demand that we leave them, for a while at least, in order to understand them.

The church at its best is a mountain top, a higher point of view. Many people say, with logic seemingly fair, that church is a lonely place because they meet too few people there to warm them up. They forget that their own presence would add to the warmth. They also forget that empty space was built into many of our churches under conditions of long ago. For this our generation is not to blame; it should not discourage us.

But a warm and "multitudinous" companionship can come to any church which realizes that fellowship, the touch of neighborly homelikeness, a sense of our common share in God, are found in worshiping together. Here is a mountain for the renewal of the soul. If ever a terrifying world needed such elevation for society's redemption, it is our world of today.

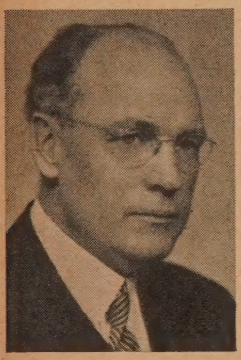
George Lawrence Parker.

They Missed Christmas!

By WILLIAM B. LAMPE

And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea. Matthew 2:4-5.

DID YOU ever read a very familiar story with this question in mind—Is there any part of the story that I have never noticed? It was with that question in mind that I read the second chapter of Matthew, and some things jumped out at me that I had never seen there before. The wise men on their quest had always so intrigued me that they carried me with them to Bethlehem. I seemed to stand beside them as they found the object of their search, poured out their treasures and departed satisfied. But what of the others in the story who directed them, yet did not make the journey? Knowing all about it, they missed Christmas!



Matthew tells us that wise men arrived in Jerusalem seeking one who had been born to be king. They came to Herod, representative of Rome, with their question, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? The wily Herod must have thought to himself—if there is a king born to these people, their leaders must know; so he summoned the chief priests, the lawyers, the leaders of the people and put the question to them. He discovered that they had the answer at the tip of their tongues. It was predicted in their scriptures that the King was to be born in Bethlehem. They showed him the writing: "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel." They directed the wise men to the king for whom they sought—but they did not make the journey with them.

THE PRIESTS MISSED CHRISTMAS

Let us look at that group. Surely the high priest was there. He was at the head of the religious life of Israel. He presided at the high altar on the day of atonement, and entered the Holy of Holies to plead for the people. He must have known of the strange happenings in the house of the priest Zacharias; for while this priest was at his service at the altar he had been stricken dumb. He had had a vision that there was to be born one who was to be an Elijah to make ready the people for the Lord. Such a thing as that could not have happened in the temple without the high priest knowing about it. You would think that, when these wise men came saying that they had seen in the heavens the star of a new leader in Jerusalem, he would instantly have connected the two. But no, he simply told the wise men that it was down in Bethlehem that they would find the object of their search. He did not go. He was one who missed Christmas.

As I meditated upon that, I had to stop and think a long, long time. Could I myself miss Christmas? If the high priest, with all his experience, with all his learning, could miss the obvious, what about the man who now stands as a minister of Christ? I recalled that Paul in one of his writings said that he had to be everlastingly at himself lest, in preaching to others, he himself should be a castaway. Well, I have preached to others many and many a time. I have preached about Bethlehem and the Christ who was to be found there. Might it be possible that I, too, would miss Christmas?

OFFICIALDOM, AND THE CHURCH

But it was not only the high priest. The officers of Israel were called. Their wise men and legal minds were well versed in all the prophetic literature. They knew the hopes and expectations of Israel. When the question was put to them, there was no disagreement. With one accord, they gave the direction. The one who should be born king would be found in Bethlehem. Of that they were all certain. Yet, their curiosity was not even aroused by the strange quest of these strangers from the East. Yes, they too had seen a star. It had shone brilliantly in their sky. But it had not occurred to them that it was connected with happenings right in their midst. Yes, they too knew about Zacharias. And they must have known about Simeon and Anna as well. But though they told the wise men where to go, they did not follow to see for themselves. So they missed Christmas.

Then again, I had to stop and think about the church—the church and its official life, the church in its whole approach to the world. For it is the church that proclaims the story of Christ. It is the church that has its organization and sends out its missionaries. It is the church that now faces the world to say: "In Bethlehem there is born one, the Prince of Peace, who alone will be your Savior." Is it possible that the church, preaching its message to a lost world, itself misses Christmas? Can it be that the Christian church is so set in its own forms, so wedded to its own ritual and ideas, that it cannot follow in simple wonder down the road to Bethlehem and mingle with the shepherds and the wise men as they gave their gifts? Can it be that the church itself is missing Christmas?

THE PHARISEES—AND WE

There was another group in that hurried conference, I am sure. Representatives of the Pharisees would be present. They were the religious fundamentalists of that day. They were the ones who took their religious life most seriously. They lived close to the synagogues and to the temple. They were punctilious in keeping all the points of the law and in understanding the message of the prophets. They concurred with the lawyers of the church that it was in Bethlehem their longed-for Messiah would come. But they did not go. So they missed Christmas.

Then I thought again of all of us, members of this beloved church. We have kept its building in repair.

We have beautified the sanctuary with memorials. We have been present at its services. We have trained our children and taught them the story of the Christ. We have sought to guide them in the understanding of his will and of his way. Can it be that we who have worshiped, who are sure that we love him—can it be that we have missed the central spirit of it all, that we really have missed Christmas?

Strange story, isn't it! The chief priests, the church officers and the religious leaders gave the directions which sent a group of earnest inquirers to a successful conclusion of their quest. For the wise men, it was a wonderful experience. They went on their directed way. They found Jesus and gave their gifts. But those who knew, those for whom this child had come to be the king, those who claimed him as the hope of the world—directing others—they themselves missed Christmas. That was years ago! What about today? Will *you* miss Christmas?

ARE WE TOO BUSY?

Why was it that it happened that way? I am quite sure there were many apparently good reasons for it. For one thing, these folks were all busy. The chief priest carried great responsibilities. He was responsible for the orderly procession of the sacrifices at the temple. The details of their feasts had to be cared for. Care must always be given to the sacrificial altars and the order of priests to attend them. He had no time to go down to Bethlehem. And so for the members of the Sanhedrin, these Jews were a turbulent people. There were always knotty problems to be solved, disputes to be settled, a peaceful relation with Rome maintained. They could not be bothered to take the time to go down to Bethlehem. And so for the leaders of the church, they could not miss their hours of prayer. They had not missed a single service at the synagogue or a single feast at the temple in all their lives. Their regular routine of religion could not be disrupted. They were all so busy—far too busy to go along with these seeking wise men in search of a King! So they missed Christmas.

Did you ever stop to reflect upon the fact that you might be so very busy doing good things that you miss the best thing? It is often said that if you want to get something done, ask a busy person to do it. I do not say that any more. Christian people as I know them are busy in a wide variety of worthy charities. They are so very busy that the work of Christ himself, the work of their church, the guiding of young lives in an understanding of the things of the Kingdom, too often has no place at all.

Did you see the picture, "Anna and the King of Siam"? Do you recall that incident where the mother of the crown prince denounced Anna for her failure? All of the hopes of the mother's life had been staked upon the possibility that Anna might give the crown prince a new understanding of life and might touch his heart with a new devotion. But Anna had been so occupied doing a multitude of things and teaching so many, many people that she had found no time for special thought for the one who some day would be king. Doing good, she missed the best.

KNOWING CHRIST AS LORD

How often that is true in life! Those of us who are committed to Christ and who want the triumph of his Kingdom are pulled here and there with a multitude of requests. We are spending our energies without reserve and every night finds us completely fagged. Is it not time we asked ourselves, Are we so busy with the good that we are missing the best? Are we keeping ourselves from making that essential journey to Bethlehem where Christ possesses our own souls and we know him as our Lord?

But not only were these people busy. Something else was wrong. The simple fact is they had lost all expectation that anything would happen for the redemption of Israel. For generations now they had been looking—looking for their promised king. Time after time hope had been born, but hope had always been dashed. Gamaliel tells something of that story in his speech to the council. It had always been a false alarm. Men had arisen and claimed that they were the promised Messiah. Eagerly, people had followed them only to have hope dashed and they were again labeled futile insurrectionists. So now, although men had come saying that they had seen a new star which they felt to be the star of the Jewish king, and though one of their priests had had a vision in the temple itself that that long-promised leader would soon appear, hope had died within them. So they missed Christmas.

Does Christmas thrill you now? Do you catch the eagerness of it? Is there the thrill of a new search? Or is it just an old, old story? I think that is the tragedy of Christmas! For most of us, there is no great hope. We know what will happen. Stores are full. People are spending money. Beautiful bundles are being wrapped up. We will have our happy parties. Fathers and mothers will work themselves sick for their children. It's a wonderful time. But nothing will happen except that a lot of bills will have to be paid. There will be no fulfillment of the angels' promise of peace on earth. The god of war still has us in his grasp. Greed still will play havoc with our lives. For most of us, and for most of the world, Christmas has degenerated into a meaningless, secular routine. The divine thrill is lacking. We expect nothing to happen.

'SO WHAT?'—AND WE MISS CHRISTMAS

A few weeks ago, a young man was talking to me about his religious life, and about his church relationship. I asked him if he went regularly to worship when he was away at school. He said that he used to do so, but he had become somewhat careless. He said that when he went to church, he stood up and sang, bowed down to pray, listened to the minister speak, and went out and said, "So what?" I wonder if that is the attitude we have toward Christmas. We have our parties. We give and receive our presents. We read the story of the wise men and then we say, "So what?" And so, we miss Christmas.

There was one thing more, I am sure, that worked to deter them from their journey. They were afraid to go. They knew the ruthlessness of Herod. To have

shown any interest in one born to be king of the Jews would have brought swift and terrible punishment. No use stirring up sleeping lions! If these wise men from a distance wanted to get some trouble for themselves, that was their lookout. Perhaps some time God would enter life dramatically and establish his rule. But until that time they were going to get along as best they could. They would not antagonize Herod. The best they could hope for was to keep the status quo. So they missed Christmas.

SLAVES OF FEAR

Are we kept from going to Bethlehem by fear? For we, too, have made our peace with the powers of this world. We are getting along fairly well and the powers of evil are relentless to those who show an interest in or who give their lives in full devotion to the Christ. So many things would be upset. So many things that we ourselves delight in would have to go. Oh, to be sure, we say evil must be overcome. Some time politics and business and labor and society itself must be cleansed of corruption, and the Kingdom of God actually be established in our midst. All of the evil powers that have such a large voice in controlling life as we know it —someone, some day, must fight them. But as for us, no! We are quite comfortable as we are. We have no intention of antagonizing the rulers of this world. If some wise men want to seek a new king, let them seek. We wish them well. But for ourselves we will not make the journey to Bethlehem with them.

But will you dream with me for a few moments! Long years ago these strangers went to Bethlehem and there they found the King that humanity was seeking. They found the Christ. Those who gave them the directions, to whom he belonged, for whom he was the fulfillment of prophecy and hope—they did not go. They missed Christmas. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

So it has been down through the years! Something does happen at Christmas! Something will happen at Christmas! All around the world in our day wise men are seeking—as they never have sought in all recorded history. It is the same search—"Where is the Prince of Peace?" Let your thought go to any part of the world. Europe in its agony—Italy, up in the valleys and in the little villages, where the spirit of Luther seems to be stalking the land; in the islands of the Pacific; in Japan, China and India—in every land and in every clime wise men are asking, "Where can we find him?" "Where can we find him who alone can help us in our dire need?"

THE ONE WHOM WE SEEK

At Christmas we give the answer! The babe of Bethlehem is the one for whom you seek! "From Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand" wise men will be making that journey because we have given them the directions. They will find it to be true that "Christ *is* born in Bethlehem"—that his peace is available to all who in truth open their hearts to him. They will blend their voices in singing:

O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in, Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels, The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel.

Wise men will give their gifts and will be satisfied! But what of us? He is our heritage! All the blessings of our life are wrapped up in him. We know all about it. We have broadcast the message to all the world. We have sent our missionaries to preach the good news in every tongue. Guiding others to Bethlehem, will we ourselves refuse to go? Will we miss Christmas?

On Keeping Alive to Christ

By WILLIAM H. HUDNUT, Jr.

Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? John 14:9.

ONE DAY near the end of his ministry, Jesus was talking to his disciples about the relationship between God and himself. He was soon going to be with God, he said, and he would prepare a place for them in his Father's house. If they believed in God, they should also believe in him. Receiving him they received God; knowing him they knew God; seeing him they had seen God. Jesus told them that he was the true and living way, and that no one could come to the Father except by means of him.

What Jesus meant, however, seemed to pass over Philip's head. Either he was so accustomed to hearing it that it made no real impression on him, or else he simply failed to understand. In any event, after Jesus had told his disciples that he was the revelation of God, Philip said: "Lord, show us the Father." Patient as he was, Jesus must have despaired at Philip's lack of comprehension. "Have I been so long time with you and dost thou not yet know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father. Has not my whole aim in life been to reveal God to you? For nearly three years we have been together constantly, and still you fail to understand me. You have grown accustomed to what I say without perceiving what I mean. I cannot live in your heart unless you know me, Philip; how can you hear my words without comprehending who I am?"

Philip's lack of insight, his failure to see that his Lord was the true revelation of God, recalls to my mind one extraordinarily clear and beautiful day in the Adirondacks when an errand took me to a near-by farmhouse. Struck by the lovely view of the Keene Valley range some forty miles away I commented on the beauty of it to the farmer. A direct spiritual de-

scendant of Philip, he replied that he had not noticed the view, and went on to say: "If you lived up here all the time same as we do you wouldn't pay much attention to the mountains either, I guess." Well, perhaps not, but I hope I would. I should hate ever to take such a glorious view as that for granted. Something has gone out of a man's soul when he becomes so accustomed to beauty that he no longer appreciates it.

Another day I was visiting with a poor, overworked woman who had to take in washing to make ends meet. There was a radiance in her tired face that one could not escape, and presently the reason for it became apparent. She took me to a high pasture behind the house to see the gorgeous view; the sun was low over the mountains and in another few minutes the sky would be streaked with color. "Every evening when it's fair I come up here to watch the sunset," said the woman, "it rests me so." She had discovered significance in the usual, had never allowed herself to become blind to everyday beauty.

In the presence of religion most of us are like that farmer, are we not? when we should be like that woman. Instead of carrying with us a sense of the wonder and beauty of life we grow so used to it that all the romance and adventure fade from the picture. Like the farmer, we do not pay much attention to the view because we have it. We take our easily accessible religion for granted and in so doing miss out on the real meaning of it. "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?"

I

One mistake that farmer made was this: he never really *saw* the mountains at all. The first thing we must train ourselves to do if we want our religion to be a challenge instead of a habit is honestly and steadily to look at it; we cannot keep ourselves alive to Jesus unless we do that. We must learn to see Christ constantly and see him whole. Many of us never bother to look at him closely, cultivate him as a friend, study his teachings or try to emulate his spirit, and all this is involved in knowing him. When, for instance, have you read one of the Gospels at a sitting? When have you read a book about Christ? Is it a spiritual custom with you to ask yourself what Jesus would do if he were in your place? The danger of having Christ so accessible is that we become accustomed to him, accepting him without appreciating him. That farmer's familiarity with the view bred in him a certain contempt for it. It was there all the time, always to be had for the asking, and because of its very proximity he ignored it.

So, Philip grew used to Jesus and failed to appreciate him. So our physical nearness to the church tends, paradoxically enough, to create in us a strange spiritual remoteness from it; we give our religion a passing glance on Sunday but fail to carry it with us as a directing power for the remainder of the week. Because of its very nearness many people thus succumb to the spiritual peril of taking it for granted and gradually grow accustomed to ignoring it. They have their church, even as the farmer had his view, so they forget about it.

There is an advantage in the close, permanent relationships of life which we dare not overlook. Out of enduring and established connections come life's richest meanings, for the true value of any human relationship is not discovered until it has known time, endured suffering and hardship, drunk deep and long at the springs of patience and forbearance. No fly-by-night, casual acquaintance can compare in value to a time-defying friendship. None of the arts can be cultivated quickly; the richest meanings of painting, music and literature emerge only when one lives with them permanently. Dorothy Canfield is correct in saying that "an enormous increase in stability, dignity and sheer vitality is bestowed on any relationship that is recognized as permanent." No life can become deep without flowing for a long time through the same channel.

Why does the church, as a general rule, frown upon divorce? Because it takes a relationship that ought to be permanent, that is at its best only when it is permanent, and makes it casual, temporary, a matter all too often of selfish convenience. It is through life's permanent commitments that we grow.

This truth needs to be emphasized in the shifting currents of this dynamic world order in which we are privileged to live. Some think that now is the time to declare a moratorium on Christian love, on accepted moral standards, on fair dealing and straight thinking. Nothing could be more harmful to our nation. Just at this time when so many of us are confused, when the saving sense of individual identity and personal responsibility is all but removed from some lives by the overpowering problems of the world, we need more than ever to hold fast to our faith in the great permanent relationships of life—a man to his family, a man to himself, a man to his God.

During the war a friend of mine was ministering at a southern camp and a blustering, half-drunk civilian accosted him as he was talking to a group of soldiers. "So you're a preacher, are you," said the drunk; "I started to study to be a parson once, but I didn't like it. Then I studied to be a doctor, but I didn't like that. Now the only thing I like is this," holding aloft his bottle. Then, "What're you gonna talk about tonight, preacher?" My friend looked the poor fellow squarely in the eye and said: "My topic for tonight is 'What Are You Running Away From?'" The drunk looked at him for a moment and then, a bit crestfallen, said, "Me!" Such is the tragic story of many a life that cannot live with itself, that has not sanctified this central and permanent relationship; it is a story of "I" running away from "me."

There is a lot of that going on these days, and we Christians need to look at life steadily and hopefully, for the day we live in is one of fog and low spiritual visibility. We need to see the mountains as well as the farm, the stars as well as the darkness, the Christ as well as the cross, the Kingdom of God beyond the difficulties and failures of the moment. That is what we as Christians, we as heralds of the age to come, we as followers of him who proclaimed and practiced brotherhood, need to see and work for. Only in a close and permanent relationship to Christ will we find strength for these times. But his spirit cannot help us as long

it remains a frozen asset in our lives. We need to Jesus for what he is, take a fresh hold on his attitle toward life and through him understand God ew. "Have I been so long time with you and yet s thou not known me, Philip?"

II

Another mistake that the farmer made was this: he led to share the beauty at his door. He not only ver really saw the view, but what is worse, he ver gave it away. I doubt if he ever called anye's attention to it as long as he lived on that spot. any of us have precisely the same attitude toward r Lord: we do not share him and that is why we do t know him. We never call anyone's attention to him anything we say or do. We are not, like Paul, able say, "I know him whom I have believed." You can't have much faith without sharing it, feeling it and ing enthusiastic about it. Certainly no other attitude ward Jesus can suffice. The very process of showing hers by word and deed the beauty of his character ill increase our own attachment to him. How long s it been since you have shared your devotion to hrist with anyone else? And to put an even more arching question, have you a devotion to him worth aring?

We say that we are so accustomed to religion that is no longer challenging. But when we stop to think out it, are not the commonest things in life the most allenging? Nothing is more common than food, clothg and shelter, yet most of man's endeavor still relves around these three great essentials; they challnge him more than anything else. Their everyday pect, the fact that we customarily think of them and ibitually plan for them, does not make us neglect em. Why, then, should we neglect religion, which ter all is food, clothing and shelter for the soul?

Unless we give our Christianity away we will not ive much. The very nature of our faith demands that be shared. Otherwise it is lost; we grow accusmed to it and it grows dead within us. Probably the ason many find it so difficult to give away their faith that the habitual emphasis of their lives is not on ving at all, but on getting. According to the psycholosts, there are seven main desires that stimulate most man conduct: the profit motive, the ownership moe, the leadership motive, the power motive, the apearance motive, the pleasure motive, and the fear otive. You will notice that all of these motives repreent desires that are either acquisitive or selfish, and in ew of this there is small wonder that it is difficult for to learn how to love and give and serve. Yet these tter motives are at the center of Christianity! If we il to share Christ's spirit we have not begun to underand him. We are like the farmer instead of like the oman! The only way really to hold fast to our religion to give it away. "Have I been so long time with you id dost thou not yet know me, Philip?"

III

Perhaps the main reason, however, why that farmer ew accustomed to those mountains and failed to find

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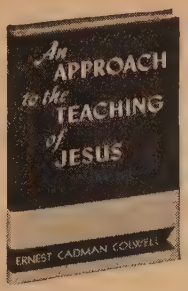

By Ernest C. Colwell

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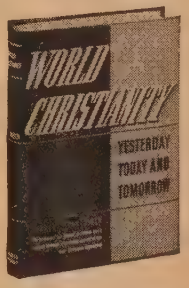

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any challenge to nobler living in their beauty was because he had never climbed them himself. He had not earned them so he did not appreciate them; he had given nothing to them, so he was given nothing by them. Now you never really value a mountain until you climb it. This is true with anything worthwhile; the best way to prevent yourself from becoming blasé about it is to participate in it. We cannot be indifferent to what costs us effort; boredom is defeated by action. To one who does not know how to play golf, golf looks both easy and dull but to the participant it is neither. One Christian enterprise looks like any other to the man who sits on the side lines and criticizes but to those who are in the struggle each campaign for a better world holds its particular problems and special fascination. And thus it always is: the fun of life is largely denied to the spectator, largely reserved for the participant. Life is vivid, changeful, purposeful for him.

So that farmer would have had a new conception of his mountains if he had climbed them, just as some Christians would have a new conception of their religion if they would start trying to practice it. Not to face the spiritual issues of life makes us soft and shallow, like bystanders who habitually watch and never perform. Climbing the steep ascent with Christ in daily prayer and in steady service brings both a greatly enhanced appreciation of his character and a greatly increased desire to radiate his spirit. It keeps us alive to him. As we act for him under the guidance of God we find ourselves no longer accustomed to him but continually amazed at the grandeur, the variety and the fascination of his way of life. It is high time for us to begin climbing our spiritual mountains! "Have I been so long time with you and dost thou not know me, Philip?" How can we know Christ, then? First, by really seeing him; second, by sharing him; and third, by serving him. I do not say it is easy, but I do say it is indispensable if the world is to be saved. Life has no other meaning that I can see. Here are the greed and selfishness and lust for power that breed our continual conflicts, but they are not of him and cannot save the world nor redeem your soul. Here is base indifference to the needs of those around you, but it is not of him, and it can neither change society nor yourself. There is no way out of the sin and confusion in which we find ourselves other than the way of the cross, the way of suffering love. This is no time to be so accustomed to our Christian faith that we forget to know it, to share it and to practice it.

Goodness and righteousness are always available, waiting to be brought in by you and me. We must never let the beauty and opportunity of ordinary life escape us in the daily round, the accustomed task. Do you remember how sweet young Mary Webb, who died in childbirth in Thornton Wilder's play, "Our Town," was allowed to return to life for a single day? She was waiting for the eternal part of her to come out clear, and she could not quite give up life yet. But only a little time back on earth convinced her that she could no longer endure the blindness of her loved ones to the everyday, commonplace beauty of life. So she bids the world a last farewell. "Goodby, world. Goodbye, Grover's Corners. Goodbye to clock's ticking and Mama's sunflowers and food and coffee and new ironed dresses and hot baths and sleeping and waking up. O earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you! Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it, every, every minute?"

Mary Webb discovered too late the full challenge and beauty of the customary. Too late she learned that the most meaningful and glorious possessions in life are those we have with us all the time, but which we seldom see. "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" Let us keep close to Christ, close to his spirit, close to his manner of doing, close to his way of seeing, ever so close!

Recently, I found with a start that I was carrying my date book in the pocket where, in my younger and less busy days, I had carried my New Testament. The Gospel had given way to the schedule, the appointments of the world had been substituted for the words of life. I quickly changed this deplorable situation and started carrying my New Testament once again, only to discover to my dismay that it was seldom opened. It was in my pocket but not sufficiently in my mind, nor on my heart. Unless we carry Christ there we do not really understand him at all. "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" Though his answer to this question is not recorded, I venture to say that before that day was done Philip had sought out his Master, and kneeling in humility before him had said from the depths of his soul: "Oh, use me, Lord, use even me. Just as thou wilt, and when and where."

A Christmas Prayer

By JAMES DALTON MORRISON

O CHRIST of Bethlehem, let us not forget Thee on Thy birthday. In our busy preparation and our joyous festivities may we not crowd Thee out of our thoughts as Thou wast crowded out of the inn on that first Christmas.

Forbid that we should spend all for transient pleasures and fail to find the deeper, richer joys that pass not away at eventide. Draw us back to Thy manger cradle, rekindle our sense of wonder and worship, and grant that, finding Thee in the likeness of a little child, we may feel a new reverence for childhood and a more earnest longing for those qualities of heart which childhood incarnates.

Forgive our cynicism and our pride, banish our doubts, and restore our faith in the things we cannot see or hear: the star that shines in the souls of men, and the song of peace that lingers on in a world of conflict. Like the shepherds may we return to our humble tasks feeling that heaven is not so far away, and praising God that he reveals himself not only in temples but also among the common things of life. Amen.

Judgment Day at Christmas

By HENRY E. KOLBE

ls . . . one born out of due time. I Corinthians 15:8.
ten the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his . Galatians 4:4.

NCE AGAIN we stand at the portals of Christmas. Again our voices will be raised in the glad allelujah" which the anniversary of the birth of is brings to our hearts. It is the time of gladness the laughter of children, the time of love and giving, of feasting and joy. It recalls the time when God gave to men the gift of love in his Son, that through his life and teaching and faithfulness-unto-death men might see into the very heart of the Father and be drawn to him and be saved.

But there are questions when we celebrate Christmas in such a world as ours. It *is* a time of gladness, but there are many hearts that are heavy with the burden of the world's pain and f. It *is* a time of the laughter of children, but mil- s of children are fatherless and homeless, naked and and hungry. It *is* a time of love and giving, but e are few left to love these homeless ones of earth, fewer still reaching out hands of help to give the and care that mean life. It *is* a time of feasting joy, but there are the faces of those who know no and to whom food comes not as a feast but as a t of bread or a bit of contaminated meat which they and eat like wolves or else hoard carefully for life orrow.

et it was for this world that Christ came. It was these poor—these "broken, humble ruins of na- s," as Carl Sandburg has called them—that he pro- ned the way of life abundant. It was these poor, starving, these suffering ones that he loved most for whom his heart broke with grief when he per- d their plight.

nd now, after almost two thousand years of so- d "Christian" history, we face these days when are more poor and hungry, more suffering and eless people than ever before crying to God "out ery nation and kindred and tongue and people." If re at all thoughtful, we cannot but ask, "Why?" Christ live and teach and die in vain? Are they ions after all—the high hopes he has raised in the s of men through the long ages? Must mankind, e dying King Arthur cried, "reel back into the and be no more"?

id God make a mistake? Did he send his Son too before men were ready for him? Would it have wiser for Jesus to have been born at another time in other circumstances—say in our time, when his of health and help would have given new life and

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hope to such myriads of suffering men? Was Christ "born out of due time," as Paul said of himself? Or was it "in the fullness of time," according to that wisdom of God which makes man's wisdom seem foolishness, that he was born?

II

Christ *was* "born out of due time" insofar as the reception of his message was concerned. For the world was not ready to receive the word which he had to say. The world is never ready for the word of Christ. He speaks of love, but men are not ready to love. He speaks of brotherhood, but the world of competition. He speaks of peace, but the world plunges heedless and headlong into wars that grow ever worse.

So Christ stands in judgment on the world. The word that saves is at the same time the word that condemns. The gracious invitation, "Come unto Me," carries always the sanction of its refusal. If men will not come, they face the condemnation which is the result of their refusal.

It is this quality of judgment which makes the word of Christ always "out of due time." The world will not turn out of its way to follow his way. The inn at Bethlehem in which there was no room is symbolic of the rejection of Jesus which reaches its ultimate expression in the cross. It is a portrayal of the world's rejection of his message of love and brotherhood and peace.

Yes, this Christ of ours was "born out of due time" because men will not give up their ways for his way. Rather they seek to sanctify their sins by covering them with his name. For men always are slow to reject the thing that is, the customs they have known, the beliefs they have cherished. The confession of sin is difficult. And so they reject Christ "because their deeds are evil." They find no room for him in the inn. They hang him upon the cross. They scorn him in the continuous crucifixion which is their refusal of his way of brotherhood and love.

So Christ is crucified by the world—crucified at Calvary long ago; crucified in the bombings of cities in days just past; crucified in the calm self-satisfaction with which we eat to excess at Christmas while millions of God's children cry out in pain and hunger for bread and have none. "He came too soon, this Christ of peace" and brotherhood. He was born, as the way of the world goes, "out of due time." And he is crucified in the world—in our world, in our day, by us who bear his name but scorn his way.

III

And yet—and yet—there is another and deeper sense in which Christ was born "in the fullness of time." For men needed the word which God spoke through Christ. The time of his birth was one that called for a new beginning. The art and learning of Greece had degenerated into almost unrecognizable forms. The Roman empire was at its peak under the greatest of her emperors, Augustus Caesar, but it was already beginning to show signs of that inner corruption which was to lead to its fall. The religion of Israel had lost its ancient prophetic zeal and had become largely a dead legalistic letter. The time was ripe for a new world beginning. The world needed a new word of God—a new creative and redemptive power. And so it was "in the fullness of the time" of the world's need that Christ was born.

The world never wants the word of Christ, for the word which saves is the word which judges. "This is the condemnation of the world, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The world crucifies Christ *because* he speaks the word which alone can save the world from self-destruction. But God speaks because of his love and because of man's need—and "in the fullness of time" the Word becomes flesh, and Christ is born.

IV

Perhaps the day in which we live may be another "fullness of time." The days are ripe for the word of God to be spoken again, for ours too is a world of great need. The political and economic and cultural forces which have led to the development of the great scientific civilization of the West, with its vast material wealth and power, seem in these last days to have run their course and to be on their way out in a final burst of uncontrollable fire and fury.

The spiritual and moral degeneration of the days is apparent to any who will understand. "Man's inhumanity to man" has perhaps never been baser than now. We rightly shudder at the stories of systematic starvation and torture and murder that have come from the

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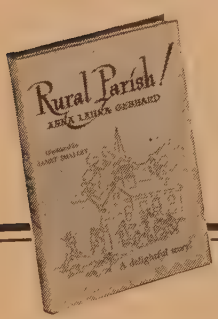

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on camps of East and West. But was not the use of h atomic bomb on civilian populations the greatest ll moral monstrosities, an atrocity not only against irst victims but against civilization itself, one from se after-effects we all recoil now in horror? For few brief years it seems possible that not only hu- ity but every living thing on earth may be destroyed our planet left lifeless and cold. Against such ter- power there is no foreseeable defense except the tion among men and nations of attitudes of trust confidence. The only defense is moral and spiritual. n stands at last face to face with the stark necessity hoosing between destroying his kind or of creating spiritual atmosphere of brotherhood and good will ch has been the fundamental element of genuine ristian teaching through the centuries.

The time is ripe again for a new world beginning. s a new "fullness of time." It is a time when "the s of the ages are come together," a "time of the aking of nations," of "the shaking of the things that be shaken." It is judgment day.

V

. . and it is Christmas!

Today as never before Christmas has meaning. For spirit of the Christ child—the spirit of gentleness l love and good will among men—must become flesh l walk the earth in the forms of men who love God l their neighbors, else we shall find in our day a new ection and a new crucifixion which will be the ulti- te doom of the world.

God is speaking to our time—speaking the word of vation and of judgment which of old he spoke in rist. Men may reject that word of salvation, but en they do judgment is passed upon them. For when n speak their word of rejection and crucify Christ esh, God speaks again in resurrection, and the world st yet again take into account the living fact of rist. So he whom the world rejects stands everlast- ly in judgment on the world.

We must decide what we shall do with this Christ, s eternal Word and Wisdom of God. "Now is the epted time." Now is the inevitable time. We cannot it another hundred thousand years, nor a hundred rs, nor ten. "The time of the breaking of nations . . . end of the ages . . . the fullness of time" is come on us. We shall live or die by the way we hear that rd and incarnate it in our personal and social and litical living.

So judgment day at Christmas comes to us. Again we back across the years and stand before the manger- rn Christ. How we act concerning him is our judg- nt. We can be like that inn at Bethlehem and close r souls against his coming. We can shut our ears ainst his teaching and harden our hearts against his rit. But in rejecting him we pass the judgment of om upon ourselves and our world.

Or we can be like Joseph and Mary and the shep- rds and the wise men, standing in silent love and ad- ration before him who is the living Word of God. e can let that Christ become in us "our universe that ls and knows," and find in following him our truest e and our most meaningful freedom.

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We must choose, and as we choose judgment confronts us. It is a day of doom or a day of life in the love and mercy of God. It is judgment day—and it is Christmas!

Wanted—Men of Vision

THE NEED is for men and women who have the vision to see what now is and what can be. Christ put particular emphasis on vision and light. He taught men to see truly and to avoid the hatred and hypocrisy which so readily blind men or warp their visions. If Christians do not produce the needed vision, how can we expect that mankind will not stumble?

The need is for more effective use of moral power. The moral law, happily, is a universal law. It is reflected by many great religions. Even without religion there is general agreement on "right" and "wrong" in their crude and obvious aspects. That fact is of immense value. It is why, even today, moral concepts can have worldwide influence. But Christians believe that, through Christ, the moral law has been revealed with greatest clarity. Christians ought, therefore, to be especially qualified to form moral judgments which are discerning and to focus them at the time and place where they can be effective.

The need is for effort on a worldwide scale. The Christian church is a worldwide institution. Christianity is not a national or regional religion, nor a class religion nor a race religion. It transcends every known human difference. That fact peculiarly qualifies Christians to discharge tasks of worldwide import.

JOHN FOSTER DULLES.

One Hope

THERE is this one hope: we must return to the main road, from which we have wandered. We must substitute the power of understanding, the truth that is really true, for propaganda; a noble kind of patriotism, which aims at ends that are worthy of the whole of mankind, for the patriotism current today; a humanity with a common civilization, for idolized nationalisms; a restored faith in the civilized state, for a society which lacks true idealism; a unifying ideal of civilized man, for the condition into which we have plunged; a con-

Their Gifts—and Ours

A Sermon for Children by Robert C. Newell

ON Jesus' first birthday he had some very nice presents given to him. Three wise men traveled all the way from the East to bring precious gifts. One of them brought gold. You know how valuable gold is: it is always precious. A second wise man brought frankincense. Now frankincense was incense, or sweet-smelling powder, which was burned in the church or at home to make the air fragrant. It was to be found only in far-off lands and was therefore very expensive. The third wise man presented the infant Jesus with myrrh. Myrrh was medicine used to heal people's diseases. Since there were no doctors in those days, myrrh also was very precious.

We do not know what became of these gifts. I have often wondered what Mary did with them. Maybe the gold was used to buy food and clothing and shelter for the Holy Family as they fled to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod. The frankincense may have been used to perfume the church on the day the infant Jesus was dedicated. And possibly the myrrh was used to cure Jesus when he fell sick, as almost every boy and girl does at some time or another.

THE MOST PRECIOUS GIFTS

But the best gift was never spent or used up. It stayed with Mary as long as she lived. It was the kindness and the compliments paid to the Christ Child by the shepherds. "Mary kept all these sayings and pondered them in her heart." The kind things said and done by the shepherds remained with her always. They were Christ's best birthday presents, for to the heart of Mary they became brighter as the gold tarnished, grew sweeter as the incense faded, and brought healing where medicine failed.

Now you and I can't give the most expensive Christmas gifts—like gold or frankincense or myrrh—but we can, all of us, give the best gifts. On Christmas Day we can tell Mother how much we love her and how much we appreciate all she does for us. We might even show her what we mean by offering to help her clear the table, do the dishes, or remove the Christmas wrappings from the front room. We can tell Dad that he's just about the most wonderful fellow on earth. He will understand how we feel when we offer to help him fire the furnace or shovel the walks or when we just quietly place his slippers and his morning paper beside his favorite chair.

'LITTLE DEEDS OF KINDNESS'

Why, this gift isn't costing us a thing! We can give it to our brothers and sisters and all our friends!

> Little deeds of kindness, little words of love
> Help to make earth happy like the heaven above.

The first thing you know you will start the angels singing the song they sang as the shepherds paid their respects to the Christ Child: "Peace on earth among men of good will."

And all the time Mother and Dad and the others will be pondering these things in their hearts. And your kindness to them will be more precious than gold, more sweet than frankincense, more healing than myrrh. For we shall have been wiser than the wise men and as noble as the shepherds.

rn with the processes and ideals of true civilization, r a preoccupation with the transient problems of liv- g; a faith in the possibility of progress, for a men- lity stripped of all true spirituality.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER.
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Brooks, W. E.: "What and to Whom Should We Preach?" (March)
Christians, W. C.: "The Ten Commandments of Coherency" (Oct.)
Ford, C.: "Post-Mortem on Monday" (May)
Freeman, E. S.: "The Sad State of Public Prayer" (April)
Hewitt, A. W.: "The Heresy of 'Rural Inferiority'" (Nov.)
Ice, H. L.: "The Appeal of the Christian Ministry" (Jan.)
Marsh, T. H.: "Hidden Sources of Preaching Power" (Aug.)
Miles, R. H.: "Concerning Church Music" (Feb.)
Rasmusson, H. R.: "Religion and the University Student" (June)
Stidger, W. L.: "Planning a Preaching Program for a Year" (Dec.)
Young, C. M.: "The Visual Must Become Vital in the Church" (July)

Book of the Month

Bennett, John: "Christian Ethics and Social Policy" (Jan.)
Bilheimer, Robert S.: "What Must the Church Do?" (May)
Colwell, Ernest C.: "An Approach to the Teaching of Jesus" (Oct.)
Craig, Clarence T.: "The Challenge of Our Culture" (Feb.)
Dodd, C. H.: "The Bible Today" (Aug.)
du Nouy, Leconte: "Human Destiny" (June)
Harkness, Georgia: "Understanding the Christian Faith" (March)
Kean, Charles D.: "The Meaning of Existence" (July)
Kennedy, Gerald: "His Word Through Preaching" (April)
Knox, John: "On the Meaning of Christ" (Dec.)
Nichols, James S.: "Primer for Protestants" (Sept.)
Van Dusen, Henry P.: "World Christianity" (Nov.)

Sermons for Children

Fredericks, R. S.: "A Way of Remembering" (April)
Jeschke, R. P.: "He Was Still Free" (Feb.); "God Is My Partner" (May); "A New Kind of Wall" (July); "The Wrong Kind of Courage" (Sept.)
Lankler, R. C.: "False Fronts" (Jan.); "Do Your Work Well!" (Oct.)
Newell, R. C.: "Their Gifts—and Ours" (Dec.)
Pleune, P. H.: "Running a Race" (Aug.)
Wilson, R. A.: "The First Thanksgiving" (Nov.)

Pastoral Prayers

Ansley, R. (May)
Ferris, F. H. (Aug.)
Hahn, H. W. (Feb.)
Helfenstein, R. C. (Nov.)
Lee, W. H. (March)
Morrison, J. D. (Dec.)
Parker, G. L. (July)
Perkins, J. C. (April)
Rasche, W. C. (Sept.)
Rose, E. J. (June)
Seidenspinner, C. (Oct.)
Tittle, E. F. (Jan.)

A Year's Preaching Program

By WILLIAM L. STIDGER

YOUNG theological students and preachers are always making a request by word of mouth and by letter: "Give us a preaching program for a year entirely outside the Church Year. We observe the Church Year program in our morning service but we want something for the more popular Sunday evening service."

This little piece is my answer.

● *'Beginnings' and 'Great Men'*

January is the natural, logical time to preach a series of sermons on "Great Beginnings": the "Beginnings of the Great Religions," the "Beginnings of Great Movements" such as Democracy, the Red Cross, Political Parties, Churches (Methodism, Congregationalism, Lutheranism, etc.). This type of sermon series gives a chance for the educational process in preaching and that ought always to be included in a year's preaching program.

Lincoln's and Washington's birthdays come in February and these set the pace for a month's popular preaching program. Our people naturally expect us to preach on both Lincoln and Washington in February, so why not make it a month of biographical preaching centered around Lincoln and Washington? The best preaching on earth, after all, is biographical. The material is unlimited. The old classical biographies and autobiographies would fill a house; and each year new and fascinating biographical material is being printed; in the past five years, for illustration, there have been at least ten books on William Allen White. My favorite biographies of the past quarter-century are: *Forty Years for the Labrador* by Sir Wilfred Grenfell; *Alice Freeman Palmer* by Dr. Palmer, her Harvard philosopher-husband; *My Education and Religion* by George A. Gordon, the great Boston preacher; *Dean Briggs* by Rolla Brown; *And Gladly Teach* by Bliss Perry. All these books afford rich material for this special month of biographical preaching.

● *Month of Visiting Speakers*

I have always found it helpful to have the month of March devoted to outside speakers and special events. Most any minister is wise to give himself a relief from preaching about this time in the year and fill his pulpit with visiting preachers, writers, etc. If he will get the best he will pack his church, make it financially profitable and render a service to his people which will be greatly appreciated. In my day I have usually had an "Edwin Markham Night," a "Ralph Connor Night," an "Eddie Guest Night," a "Rolla Brown Night," in which I invited these writers to appear in my pulpit and give readings from their own works. Those nights have always been profitable in every way.

In most cities there are enough resident "great names" among preachers and writers to make this a fairly easy program to engineer; and even in a small town it is possible for the minister to get outstanding speakers from

WILLIAM L. STIDGER

elsewhere, of course paying well for them. The "Tops" names always draw a crowd.

● *The Month of 'Great Books'*

I like to follow my month of visiting preachers and writers with a month of my own preaching on great religious books. I have never known a year in my ministry when at least a dozen excellent novels on religious themes were not published. As I run my mind back over the years I think of *Magnificent Obsession,* Lloyd Douglas' first great religious book, which was followed by *Green Light, Forgive Us Our Trespasses, Precious Jeopardy, White Banners, Disputed Passage, Dr. Hudson's Secret Journal* and *The Robe.* Every preacher knows *The Robe,* a magnificent story of the Christ which this fall, "at long last," is out in one of the most ambitious colored pictures ever produced, more than $6,000,000 being spent on it. That will make preaching on this great book timely all over again. I use Lloyd Douglas as an illustration simply because he is timely and universally known.

However, several books by Dorothy Clarke Wilson, wife of a Methodist minister, are just as timely. Take her last year's great biblical book, *The Herdsman* and her book about Christ, *The Brother.* They will afford impressive backgrounds for dramatic book sermons for this month. The books of Sholem Asch are also timely and worthy.

● *'Musical Month' and 'Home Month'*

I like to devote the month of May to special musical features in my popular Sunday night services because in most of the nation the great musical festivals are produced then, especially in the midwest. It is smart to time a series of Sunday evening musical features into this psychology. There are few preachers and few churches which could not plan for a special musical program each Sunday night in May: a string quartet, a group of girl trumpeters, soloists, Negro spiritual singers, a single harpist or a group of harpists. The sermon themes for these May Sunday evenings could be: "Music of the Wild," "The Melody of Religious Living," "Harmony in the Home," "Celestial Music."

June naturally calls for a program celebrating the spirit of home, for these reasons: One Sunday we universally celebrate Children's Day, that being a set day in most denominations. In this month also comes Father's Day. Also June is a marriage month by tradition, and there ought to be a day set aside for preaching about the sacred contract of marriage. Add to that the fact that June is commencement month, wherein millions of young people graduate from high school and college—an experience intimately connected with home—and you have a Home Month which is well worth celebrating.

● *'Patriots' Month'*

July starts off with the Fourth of of July, which makes it logical and natural to make it a Patriots' Month with a special sermon for the Sunday preceding the Fourth and from there on going into the sermonic celebration of the great patriotic events of our American history.

I was recently talking with a famous radio executive in New York and he told me of a new radio show

start this year which is to do hing but dramatize the great mo- its in American history. If radio otes a whole year to such a pro- m, why shouldn't we preachers aside at least a month in our aching to recall these great events our national history? If it is popu- and helpful on the radio, it will so in the pulpit.

● *Month of Nature Sermons*

Dr. Charles E. Jefferson, through- his thirty-year ministry at Broad- y Temple in New York, preached h year a series of "Nature Ser- ns" and always had his church on oadway packed for them. He put se sermons into book form and they still available. I have two of se books—*Outdoor Men and inds* and *The Epic of Earth*—ich included nature sermons which re preached in city churches from n Francisco to Detroit, Kansas ty to Boston, on hot nights to wded churches.

People who cannot get out of the y on August Sunday nights are at- cted by such themes as: "Trees of Bible," "Seas of the Bible," "Flow- ," "Valleys," "Brooks," "Moun- ns," "Birds," "Clouds," "Storms." e Bible is full of the things of na- re. At each of these services cele- ating nature we sing the great na- re hymns: "There's a Wideness in od's Mercy," "Rock of Ages," rom Greenland's Icy Mountains," c. Such a program is an attractive ychological gesture for hot August nday evenings.

● *Homecoming, Harvest, Thanksgiving*

September starts off with Labor ay and all alert ministers properly lebrate Labor Sunday and then finish e month as a Homecoming Month cause of the fact that that is the ood of the people at that season.

October is the month of the gather- g in of the harvests in most parts the country. It is the month of utumnal foliage. It is a time when ople will be impressed by preaching "Harvests of Hope," "Color and eauty in Religion," "Harvest Festi- ls," "Whatsoever a Man Soweth hat Shall He Also Reap." The Bi- e and the hymnbooks are replete ith the harvest and ingathering spirit.

The "Harvest Festival Month" of ctober naturally leads into "Thanks- ving Month." Why not preach a hanksgiving sermon every Sunday in ovember, on such themes as "Thanks r the American Heritage," "Thanks r the Great Souls of the Past"?

ive thanks, O heart, for the great souls Vhich point us to the deathless goals,

s Edwin Markham puts it. Add such emes as "Thanks for the Coming of Peace," "Thanks for the Book of Books," "Thanks for the Spiritual Life." And of course sing the great thanksgiving hymns.

● *Crowning Month of the Year*

Just as I think it wise to devote a whole month to preaching Thanksgiving sermons, so I think it wise to preach a whole month of Christmas sermons. The post office spends the whole month propagandizing people to mail their Christmas packages early; the business world spends the whole month getting the people ready for Christmas; individuals spend the whole month getting the material things of Christmas ready; the magazines spend a whole month in advertising and getting ready for Christmas merchandising; stores have their windows and shelves filled with Christmas material—and we of the church devote but one Sunday to getting our spiritual attitudes in tune for Christmas.

Why not sing the great Christmas hymns every Sunday in December? Why not preach every Sunday on the inexhaustible themes of Christmas, starting with the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, and coming down through the fulfillment in the coming of the Christ Child—thus leading the people gradually, and spiritually, through an entire month to the day celebrating the climactic event? Do it through "The Great Christmas Art," "The Great Christmas Legends," "The Great Christmas Carols," "The Great Christmas Poetry," "The Great Christmas Event."

Do it in the spirit of Edwin Markham's social poem, "The Consecration of the Common Way," which closes:

Now have the homely things been made
Sacred, and a glory on them laid.
For He, whose shelter was a stall,
The King, was born among them all.
He came to handle saw and plane,
To use and hallow the profane:
Now is the holy not afar
In temples lighted by a star,
But where the loves and labors are.
Now that the King has come this way,
Great are the things of every day.

Indispensable Books *for* Ministers

Minister's Service Book: **J. D. Morrison**

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☆ WHO'S WHO IN THIS ISSUE ☆

For the past three years Rev. THOMAS ANDERSON has ministered at Central Congregational Church, Atlanta, Ga. Earlier pastorates were in Chicago and Detroit. His early plans were for a career as an architect, but he abandoned that field for the Christian ministry.

Rev. E. RAY BURCHELL *received his later education* at the University of Pittsburgh and at the Boston U. School of Theology. He has held pastorates at Braddock, Pa., Kingston, N. H., and Chester, Conn. He still ministers to the United Church of Chester.

Following pastorates in Shelby, Iowa, Winfield, Kan., and Chicago, *Rev.* WILLIAM B. LAMPE went to the leadership of West Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, in 1920. He has been a trustee of Westminster College, Knox College, and the Bible College of Missouri. He has been a member of the General Council of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. since 1942, and was moderator of the 157th General Assembly of his denomination. He is a graduate of Knox College and of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Omaha, Neb.

For several years Rev. WILLIAM H. HUDNUT, *J.* ministered in Glendale, Ohio, then went to First Presb terian Church, Springfield, Ill., the church once attended b President Lincoln. He is now minister of Third Presb terian Church in Rochester, N.Y. Mr. Hudnut is a grad ate of Princeton University and of Union Theologic Seminary, New York.

A graduate of Duke University, Garrett Biblic Institute and Northwestern University, *Rev.* HENRY KOLBE served as a Methodist minister in Virginia an Wisconsin. He is serving at present as assistant professo of religion and philosophy at Earlham College, Richmon Ind., where he works in close association with Dr. Elton Trueblood.

Dr. WILLIAM L. STIDGER *is professor of homiletic* at Boston University School of Theology.

Rev. ROBERT C. NEWELL *is one of the ministers* the Baptist Church of the Master, Cleveland, Ohio.

Dr. JAMES D. MORRISON *is professor of homiletic* at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School.

TITLES AND TEXTS ☆ WHAT PULPIT READERS ARE PREACHING ABOUT

JOHN M. BURAN, First Congregational, Menomonie, Wis. "Stooping to Greatness." II Kings 5:13—"If the prophet had bid thee to do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?"

FRANCIS C. ELLIS, Community, San Dimas, Cal. "The Rediscovery of America." Josh. 13:1—"There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed."

C. WILLARD FETTER, First Evangelical United Brethren, Akron, O. "The Rock Bottom of Life." Heb. 12:27—". . . that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

DONALD B. BLACKSTONE, First Presbyterian, Twin Falls, Ida. "The Return to the Bible." Matt. 29:22—"You go wrong because you understand neither the scriptures nor the power of God."

WALTER A. SCHOLTEN, Arlington Reformed, Poughkeepsie, N. Y. "The Careless Citizen." Amos 6:1, 6—"Woe to the careless citizens . . . with never a single thought for the bleeding wounds of the nation."

CLAYTON P. SHEPARD, First Christian, Lewisville, Ark. "The Gift of God." II Tim. 1:7—"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love and of a sound mind."

M. H. PATTON, Presbyterian, Afton, N. Y. "Christian Astronomy." Phil. 2:15—"You shine like stars in a dark world."

THOMAS S. GEE, St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Detroit, Mich. "Spiritual Borderline Anemia." Col. 3:16—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you *richly*."

LESTER G. SIMON, Tremont Baptist, New York, N. Y. "The Right of Private Judgment." Job. 34:3—"A man's mind tests what he is told." (Moffatt)

WILLIAM H. WRIGHT, Methodist, Kenesaw, Neb. "Unifying Our Divided Houses." Matt. 12:25—"Every Kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand."

J. C. PERKINS, Union Congregational, Phoenix, Ariz. "The Inspired Preacher." I Cor. 14:3—"But the inspired preacher does his fellow men good and encourages and comforts them." (Goodspeed)

JOSEPH L. MIHELIC, University of Dubuque (Theological Seminary). "The Supreme Court of Religion." Ps. 119:105—"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

JOSEPH L. CONNOLLY, First Presbyterian, Robinson, Ill. "Perils to Freedom." Prov. 29:18, 25—"Where there is no vision, the people perish." "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."

W. WOOD DUFF, Hillsboro Presbyterian, Nashville, Tenn. "Our Greatest Export." Matt. 24:14—"This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations."

FOR YOUR SERMON AND TEXT

. . . . . .
Title of sermon

. . . . . .
Text used (write out the text)

. . . . . .
Name of minister

. . . . . .
Name of church

. . . . . .
Address

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The Event of the Month

DID YOU observe the 430th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in your church or in your community? If not, you missed a great ortunity to enlighten your people on the meaning of most important event in the history of the Western world. If you did, I feel sure that your experience has led you to set down the last Sunday in October, or the first in November, as a fixed date its observance in every future year. Throughout the ion, the churches celebrated the birthday of Protntism with sermons on the significance of the Refnation, historically considered, and on the problems issues which confront Protestantism in our day. In ny communities large Protestant mass meetings were d by the united churches of the community. This is ideal way to observe it, for the consciousness of t unity which underlies all our denominations comes e in such a celebration and is dramatized before the s of the whole community. Besides, there has not n a time since the days of Luther and Zwingli and lvin and Hooker when Protestantism needed so ch to take stock of itself. The issues and problems ich it faces today are of tremendous, not to say inous, importance. This is no time for Protestantism be complacent. We too easily carry over from an lier America the illusion that our Protestant faith is ely secure in this country. But its ascendancy is by no ans secure. In secularism and in Roman Catholicism ıow has two formidable competitors for the soul of ıerica. Such an occasion as the birthday of the formation should be observed with a regularity dly less than equal to that of Easter or Christmas.

formation nday

The Book of the Month

T THE MEANING OF CHRIST. *By John Knox. Scribers. $2.50.*

DR. KNOX is showing with winsome clarity that modern historical research into the origins of the New Testament writings, instead of leading to tructive conclusions, leads to a confident acceptance those things most generally believed among Chrisıs from the earliest times. The notion that the soed "higher criticism" requires us to revise the great damentals of our faith, if not to discard them, is ved false in three books which have come from his d. These are *The Man Christ Jesus, Christ the d,* and now, *The Meaning of Christ.* In this latest ıme, the author shows that the name "Christ" in New Testament carries three distinct but insepale connotations. It means 1) an event, or cluster of ıts (the life, teaching, death and resurrection of the ;on, Jesus of Nazareth, including the response of the disciples), 2) the person at the center of this event, and 3) the Christian community, or church, which was its consummation. The event, taken in its totality, and including the Christian church, *is* the Christian revelation. Not one of these three historical elements can be taken by itself as the Christian revelation, not even the person of Jesus. But when we grasp them together as integral parts of a single historical phenomenon we shall have what St. Paul referred to when he said that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." From this scant outline you will hardly be able to apprehend the thesis of this book. Yet if you ponder on it, you will feel how different it is from either the traditional apologetic of orthodoxy or the moralistic liberalism that disregards or discards all the elements of the event except the person and teaching of Jesus. Like Dr. Knox's other books, this one is beautifully written, with a simple, lucid style that reflects the clear mind of the author.

A Thought for the Month

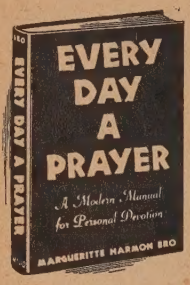
AS I see it, our thinkers today are coming to the point where they freely admit that the kind of knowledge which goes by the name of science is by no means all the knowledge there is. Science is a special kind of knowledge, a kind that serves a special purpose, and is thoroughly valid for the purpose it is designed to serve. But it is subordinate to another kind of knowledge which can be designated by the rich, old word, wisdom. Science can never supplant wisdom or invalidate the world of reality which wisdom presupposes and reveals. There is no guarantee that a scientist, be he ever so expert, is also a man of wisdom. Indeed, he may be a narrow minded and foolish man. Our emotions, our purposes, our values, our ideals, and our decisions, in their living context—of actual experience—these lie beyond the reach of scientific method. Yet we have to live day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment in this world of faith and decision. And here the kind of knowledge that we need is wisdom. Our true teacher here is not the scientist, but the sage. The wisdom of the sage is derived from life itself, not from the scientist's abstract analysis of life. The wisdom of the sage reflects the concreteness and richness of experience. Science makes a distinct contribution to wisdom, but it is not its chief source. Indeed, science may even be an obstruction to wisdom, standing in its way, and creating the tragic illusion that it is itself the supreme knowledge. Our modern education is deficient and guilty just here. It has too widely sacrificed wisdom to scientific knowledge.

Science and Wisdom

Charles Clayton Morrison

Christmas Gifts of Permanent Worth

Every Day a Prayer



By Margueritte Bro

The great popularity of this devotional book is due to the fact that it moves on the level of everyday living. Nothing abstract or musty here. For ministers —"any one of the 363 topics could be expanded into a sermon." **$1.50**

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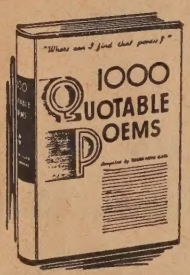
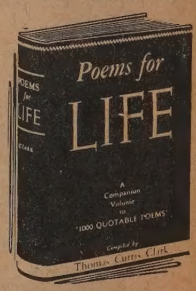
1000 Quotable Poems



Poems for Life



These two anthologies compiled by Thomas Curtis Clark are the standard collections of poems that are brief, inspirational, quotable. They include nearly 2,000 poems that are always being sought for quotation.

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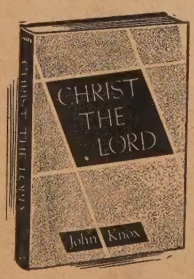
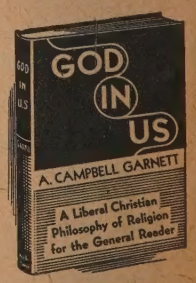


Christ the Lord: by John Knox

A great scholar considers Christ as he was seen by the early church: how "he was remembered"; he was "known still"; he was "interpreted." A fitting sequel to *The Man Christ Jesus.* **$2.00**

God In Us: by A. Campbell Garnett

God is not some Being far off, but in ourselves, speaking to us. The book is an especially fitting gift for young people. **$1.50**



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